



National Contact Center

1 (800) FED INFO

The National Contact Center (NCC), part of USA Services, the Presidential E-gov initiative, serves as a single point of contact for citizens with questions about Federal agencies, programs, and services. The NCC has brought together information from hundreds of Federal offices so citizens get the help they need right away. A single, toll-free call or e-mail connects the American public to this one-stop source of information about the Federal government.

Frequently Asked Questions

What can citizens expect from the NCC?

The NCC's specially trained staff can answer questions in English and Spanish, or direct callers to an appropriate contact. The staff is eager to help, and has the answers at their fingertips about the agencies, programs, and activities that make up the Federal government. The NCC answers more than 1.5 million calls and e-mails a year—that's over 4,100 questions a day. The American public can call toll-free **1 (800) FED INFO** (that's 1 (800) 333-4636) between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. Eastern Time. Recorded information on frequently requested subjects is available around the clock.

The public can also e-mail any questions in English or Spanish about the Federal government by going to **USA.gov** and clicking on "E-mail" under "Contact Your Government." The NCC will respond within two business days.

How does the NCC operate?

The NCC is operated under contract by a private company in Lakeland, Florida. It has two main functions: (1) responding to telephone and e-mail inquiries about Federal programs, benefits, and services; and (2) processing telephone requests for consumer publications. The operation has been contracted out since 1990.

What are some of the questions most frequently asked by the American public?

Trying to find an answer to a question about the Federal government can lead to a merry-go-round of referrals and can make getting an answer to a difficult question about the Federal government seem impossible. The NCC's information specialists can answer questions directly or find the person who can. The American public frequently calls the NCC to get answers about foreign travel, visas, passports, and immigration and naturalization. Other popular topics include Federal loans and grants, Federal jobs, buying surplus government property, Social Security and other Federal benefits.

How do agents find the right answer?

Providing the public with timely, accurate information is what the NCC is all about. The NCC pays close attention to emerging government issues and topics. It regularly reviews new information coming from Federal agencies and organizations as a result of ongoing research, legislation and public programs. The information gathered becomes part of a comprehensive knowledgebase used by the NCC information agents to give the American public the most complete and up-to-date answers.

How long has the NCC been in existence?

Since 1966, Americans have been contacting the NCC, previously known as GSA's Federal Information Center, to get answers to their questions about the government. Initially, the service was available in person and via local telephone numbers in key metropolitan areas. But, since 1990, the NCC has responded to public inquiries via a nationwide toll-free telephone number and, since 2003, responded to citizens' e-mail questions as well.

What does the NCC offer Federal agencies?

The fundamental goal of the NCC is to simplify access to the Federal government and government-related information by serving as a single, initial point of contact for telephone callers.

The NCC also works with individual Federal agencies and programs to respond to more specialized public inquiries. For example, on behalf of the Department of State, the NCC answer calls in response to public concerns about overseas travel and related issues. This service, available by calling 1 (888) 407-4747, has been of great assistance to the public. For example:

- When the tsunami struck Southeast Asia on December 26, 2004, the NCC handled 30,000 calls in the following weeks. Many Americans were worried about relatives in the affected areas. In addition, Americans in those areas wanted to let their families know they had survived.
- After the London transit system was bombed on July 7, 2005, the NCC handled over 21,000 calls in a single day from Americans concerned about family members visiting the area.

The NCC also handles requests for the free *Consumer Information Catalog*, and takes phone orders at **1 (888) 8 PUEBLO** (that's 1 (888) 878-3256) for hundreds of government publications available from the Government Printing Office distribution center in Pueblo, Colorado.

The NCC can also work with Federal agencies to assist in their responses to public inquiries. The NCC encourages agencies to redirect phone and email inquiries that are not related to the agency's mission to the NCC. The NCC will either furnish a direct answer to the questions based on website or knowledgebase

content, or will furnish the citizen with the contact information needed to secure an answer to his question (name of agency having jurisdiction over the issue, phone number, website URL, etc.). There is no cost to the agency for this service.

What else can Federal agencies do to improve citizen service?

Federal agencies can use "FirstContact," GSA's innovative contract vehicle for multi-channel contact center services. This contract vehicle is the first of its kind to offer a full range of contact center services, e-Gov solutions and customer relationship management strategies. Agencies can use this contract to obtain supplemental services for its existing contact center or to obtain full-service solutions to address their citizen service needs. For more information, go to **usaservices.gov**.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has made great use of FirstContact. When Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast, FEMA used FirstContact to set up call centers that handled 1.2 million calls over a 90-day period.

For More Information

If you are interested in obtaining additional information or exploring working with the National Contact Center or USA Services, please call Stuart Willoughby at **(202) 501-9121** or e-mail him at **stuart.willoughby@gsa.gov**.